

FISH PONDS FOR FARMERS.

Constructing Dams—Stocking the Ponds with Fish—Miscellaneous Suggestions on this Neglected Opportunity for Profit and Pleasure.

Editors Progressive Farmer:

We notice in your issue of August 9th that M. H. S., of Rutherford County, asks for some one who has had experience to write an article on the above subject to appear in The Progressive Farmer. The subject is a very important one and should be much more agitated than it is. Our agricultural schools and our agricultural papers are henceforth to be the channels through which all farm and dairying, stock raising and all new and advanced ideas and enterprises are to reach and engage the attention of our people. The fish pond on the farm is an annex too valuable to be ignored as it is. We believe the matter only needs to be properly agitated by our more progressive farmers, in order to arouse an interest in favor of this valuable acquisition which not only adds to the pleasure of farm life, but affords often a healthy toothsome diet.

There are very few farms in the South through or near which there cannot be found suitable locations and water sufficient to afford a half acre, or even an acre or more, for a family fish pond. The farmer only needs to utilize the opportunities with which nature surrounds him on all sides to be the happiest and most independent of all men. If as much attention was given to a small fish pond on the farm as is given to poultry, even backward and slack-twisted as that is; it would add untold millions to the wealth of the State.

The construction of suitable dams is the most important feature connected with the subject, for on this success or failure depends. The selection of a suitable location is the first thing of prime importance. It should be where the water could be made to spread out over about an acre of ground, with a dam at the lowest point, made of good, strong material, and often side dams are necessary. A catch dam should be constructed so as to allow only a certain amount of water to flow into the pond. Sharp, narrow ravines are not suitable for a fish pond; there may be depth but not width enough; they are good, however, to form a catch dam so as to divert the water through ditches to more suitable flats or basins. No flood water should be allowed to enter the pond, and good waste-ways should be made to guard against blowing out the dams. There are many places where a pond may be deepened by carting the land from the pond to the dams. Such ponds should be from a few inches to four or five feet deep. Shade trees and water vegetation, such as grass and shrubs is an advantage, logs and brush are not objectionable.

The pond being prepared, the next important step is to stock it with fish, of which we have many varieties. Our native fish are to be pre-

ferred, as most of these are to be had with little trouble, and the taste is finer and better than the carp. We have many varieties of the perch family which, as a pan fish, has few superiors, is easily and rapidly increased. Cat-fish is relished by some, while they and all the varieties of perch may do well in the same pond. Fish have many enemies besides man—the terrapin, turtle, mink and muskrat are all fond of fish and must be controlled in order for the pond owner to reap the best results. These may all be caught in the ordinary steel trap, properly baited, and set in the water for the two former and near deep water to catch the mink and muskrat. Drag a bait around the pond where their tracks are seen about night and fasten the bait to a stob about two or two and a half feet from the ground near deep water; set a trap near the foot of the stob fastened with chain; they track the bait to the stake and rare upon the stake with their fore-feet as if to climb up to the bait, and in dancing around the stake step in the trap with the hind feet, are caught and instantly leap into the deep water where they are drowned; the weight of the trap holding them under the water, otherwise he will gnaw his foot off and go on his errand. Water may be guided in ditches almost any reasonable distance to a location suitable for a pond.

I am Yankee enough to believe that it is the duty of every farmer to utilize every advantage with which Providence has blessed him to derive benefit for his family. An acre fish pond, well stocked and cared for, will furnish a family with all the fish they are likely to need at far less cost and trouble than the poultry branch of farm business. Where it is desirable to do so, the pond may be laid off so as to have the large game fish, such as the jack or pike, and the chub or trout, in a section to themselves, and these sections well supplied with smaller fish, such as roaches and crawfish for food for these varieties. Muddy water should be avoided if possible for any fish except the carp. To succeed in raising large carp fish, a hard bottom is necessary, as they are very shy when reaching from a half pound to one and a half pounds in weight, and any splashing of the water unusually causes them to rush so deep in the mud of soft bottom ponds that they never get out and are therefore lost.

The person who expects to keep a good fish pond by erecting a dam across some bold branch without preparing for unexpected floods may as well make up his mind in the beginning that his dam will be broken and his fish carried away sooner or later. Let the dams be so constructed in the beginning that so much and no more water can enter the pond except what falls into it by rains and the feed spout.

D. P. MEACHAM.
Wake Co., N. C.

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D. P. M.

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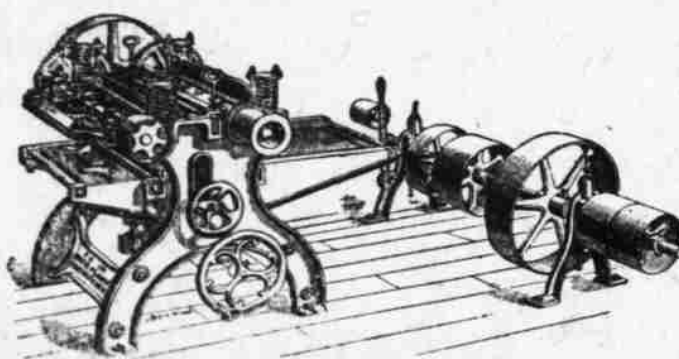
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